

2007 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Risk Behaviors of Montana Youth Involved with Alcohol

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Prepared for

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Alcohol Use among Youth

Underage Drinking

Alcohol use by persons under age 21 is a major public health problem. Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States, more than tobacco and illicit drugs. Although drinking by persons under the age of 21 is illegal, people aged 12 to 20 years drink almost 20 percent of all alcohol consumed in the United States. Over 90 percent of this alcohol is consumed in the form of binge drinks. Age at onset of drinking strongly predicts development of alcohol dependence over the course of the lifespan. About 40 percent of those who start drinking at age 14 years or under develop alcohol dependence at some point in their lives; for those who start drinking at age 21 years or older, about 10 percent develop alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. Persons with a family history of alcoholism have a higher prevalence of lifetime dependence than those without such a history.¹

In 2006, Montana reported 22,186 motor vehicle crashes; 226 were fatal crashes resulting in 263 fatalities. Of these fatalities, 126 (48 percent) were alcohol-related deaths; 108 (41 percent) involved blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of 0.08 or higher.²

Drinking Levels among Montana Youth

The 2007 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that among high school students, during the past month:

- 1 out of 2 drink some amount of alcohol;
- 1 out of 3 binge drink;
- 1 out of 4 had their first alcoholic drink before age 13;
- 1 out of 6 drove after drinking alcohol; and
- 1 out of 3 rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.³

Consequences of Underage Drinking

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:

- school problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades;
- social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities;
- legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk;
- physical problems, such as hangovers or illnesses;
- unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity;
- disruption of normal growth and sexual development;
- physical and sexual assault;
- higher risk for suicide and homicide;

- alcohol-related car crash and other unintentional injuries such as burns, falls, and drowning;
- memory problems;
- abuse of other drugs;
- changes in brain development that may have life-long effects; and/or
- death from alcohol poisoning.¹

Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction every two years to high school and 7th and 8th grade students. The purpose of the survey is to help monitor the prevalence of behaviors that not only influence youth health, but also put youth at risk for the most significant health and social problems that can occur during adolescence. While all schools in Montana can participate in the survey on a volunteer basis, approximately 50 high schools are randomly selected to be included with high schools from other states for national data and reports.

The 2007 YRBS was conducted in February of 2007 with 10,368 high school students. This represents approximately 22 percent of all high school students in Montana. Schools administering the survey were provided with detailed written instructions on conducting a random survey in their schools. To encourage accurate responses to sensitive questions, a strict protocol was implemented to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participating students.

Survey Validity and Limitations

Data used in this report from the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey are not based on a random survey. It would not be valid to generalize the findings from this survey to all high school students in Montana. It is only valid to attribute the results of this survey to the students who reported their behaviors in response to the items in the questionnaire. In addition, respondents in self-reported surveys may have a tendency to underreport behaviors that are socially undesirable, unhealthy, or illegal (alcohol consumption, drug use, seat belt non-usage, etc.) and overreport behaviors that are socially desirable (amount of exercise, etc.).

Survey Results

For the purposes of this report, youth involved with alcohol are defined as survey participants who either responded “1 or more days” to the question “During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?” (current drinker) or participants who responded “1 or more days” to the question “During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours?” (binge drinking). Ten separate risk behaviors associated with violence, sexual behavior, tobacco use, suicide, and drug use were investigated for association with the alcohol use risk behavior. These risk behaviors are listed in Table 1 and also in Table 2.

The 2007 YRBS indicates the following results:

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have driven a car when drinking alcohol in the past 30 days than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (35 percent vs. 2 percent) to have driven a vehicle when drinking alcohol than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (44 percent vs. 4 percent) to have driven a vehicle when drinking alcohol than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have had property stolen or damaged during the past 12 months than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (31 percent vs. 22 percent) to have had property stolen or damaged than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (33 percent vs. 23 percent) to have had property stolen or damaged than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have been in at least one fight during the past 12 months than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (44 percent vs. 20 percent) to have been in at least one fight during the past 12 months than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (50 percent vs. 22 percent) to have been in at least one fight during the past 12 months than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more during the past 12 months than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (32 percent vs. 19 percent) to have felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more during the past 12 months than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (34 percent vs. 21 percent) to have felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more during the past 12 months than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have attempted suicide in the past 12 months than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (14 percent vs. 10 percent) to have attempted suicide in the past 12 months than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (16 percent vs. 10 percent) to have attempted suicide in the past 12 months than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have used tobacco products on one or more of the past 30 days than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school youth who are current drinkers are more likely (40 percent vs. 8 percent) to have smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey than youth who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school youth who are binge drinkers are more likely (48 percent vs. 10 percent) to have smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey than youth who are not binge drinkers.

Montana high school youth who are current drinkers are more likely (27 percent vs. 5 percent) to have used chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey than youth who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school youth who are binge drinkers are more likely (32 percent vs. 6 percent) to have used chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey than youth who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have used marijuana in the past 30 days than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (35 percent vs. 5 percent) to have used marijuana in the past 30 days than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (43 percent vs. 7 percent) to have used marijuana in the past 30 days than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have used inhalants during their life than youth are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (25 percent vs. 8 percent) to have used inhalants during their life than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (28 percent vs. 10 percent) to have used inhalants during their life than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to have used methamphetamines during their life than youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are more likely (8 percent vs. 2 percent) to have used methamphetamines during their life than students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are more likely (11 percent vs. 2 percent) to have used methamphetamines during their life than students who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are more likely to be sexually active than youth are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school youth who are current drinkers are more likely (45 percent vs. 14 percent) to have had sexual intercourse with two or more partners during their lifetimes than youth who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school youth who are binge drinkers are more likely (54 percent vs. 16 percent) to have had sexual intercourse with two or more partners during their lifetimes than youth who are not binge drinkers.

Montana high school youth who are current drinkers are more likely (47 percent vs. 17 percent) to have had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months than youth who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school youth who are binge drinkers are more likely (54 percent vs. 20 percent) to have had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months than youth who are not binge drinkers.

- **Montana youth who are involved with alcohol are about equally likely to think of themselves as about the right weight as youth who are not involved with alcohol.**

Montana high school students who are current drinkers are about equally likely (56 percent vs. 57 percent) to think of themselves as about the right weight as students who are not current drinkers.

Montana high school students who are binge drinkers are about equally likely (55 percent vs. 57 percent) to think of themselves as about the right weight as students who are not binge drinkers.

Clearly, Montana youth who are involved with alcohol also place themselves at higher risk for negative health consequences from other undesirable behaviors than youth who are not involved with alcohol. This association exists in every behavior risk category examined and is indicative of the unhealthy and eventually costly lifestyle of youth who use alcohol.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alcohol and Public Health – Underage Drinking.

² United States Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2006.

³ 2007 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Montana Office of Public Instruction.

Table 1
2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Current Drinkers vs. Non-Current Drinkers
Montana High School Students

Health Risk Behavior	Current Drinkers	Non-Current Drinkers
Drove a car when drinking alcohol during the past 30 days (Q11)	35.3%	2.4%
Had property stolen or damaged during the past 12 months (Q17)	30.4%	22.3%
Were in a physical fight during the past 12 months (Q18)	44.4%	20.4%
Felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more during the past 12 months (Q23)	32.2%	19.3%
Attempted suicide during the past 12 months (Q26)	14.3%	10.1%
Smoked cigarettes on one or more days during the past 30 days (Q30)	40.1%	7.6%
Used smokeless tobacco during the past 30 days (Q36)	26.5%	4.9%
Used marijuana during the past 30 days (Q47)	34.7%	5.1%
Used inhalants during their lifetimes (Q51)	24.8%	8.1%
Used methamphetamines during their lifetimes (Q53)	8.1%	1.6%
Had sexual intercourse with two or more partners during their lifetimes (Q60)	45.4%	13.7%
Had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months (Q61)	47.0%	17.2%
Tend to think of themselves as about the right weight (Q65)	56.1%	57.2%

Table 2
2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Binge Drinkers vs. Non-Binge Drinkers
Montana High School Students

Health Risk Behavior	Binge Drinkers	Non-Binge Drinkers
Drove a car when drinking alcohol during the past 30 days (Q11)	44.2%	4.2%
Had property stolen or damaged during the past 12 months (Q17)	32.5%	23.2%
Were in a physical fight during the past 12 months (Q18)	49.7%	22.4%
Felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more during the past 12 months (Q23)	34.0%	21.0%
Attempted suicide during the past 12 months (Q26)	15.9%	10.1%
Smoked cigarettes on one or more days during the past 30 days (Q30)	47.7%	10.0%
Used smokeless tobacco during the past 30 days (Q36)	32.1%	6.4%
Used marijuana during the past 30 days (Q47)	42.7%	7.0%
Used inhalants during their lifetimes (Q51)	28.4%	9.6%
Used methamphetamines during their lifetimes (Q53)	10.8%	1.6%
Had sexual intercourse with two or more partners during their lifetimes (Q60)	53.6%	16.1%
Had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months (Q61)	54.2%	19.7%
Tend to think of themselves as about the right weight (Q65)	55.4%	57.2%

Figure 1
2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Current Drinkers vs. Non-Current Drinkers
Montana High School Students

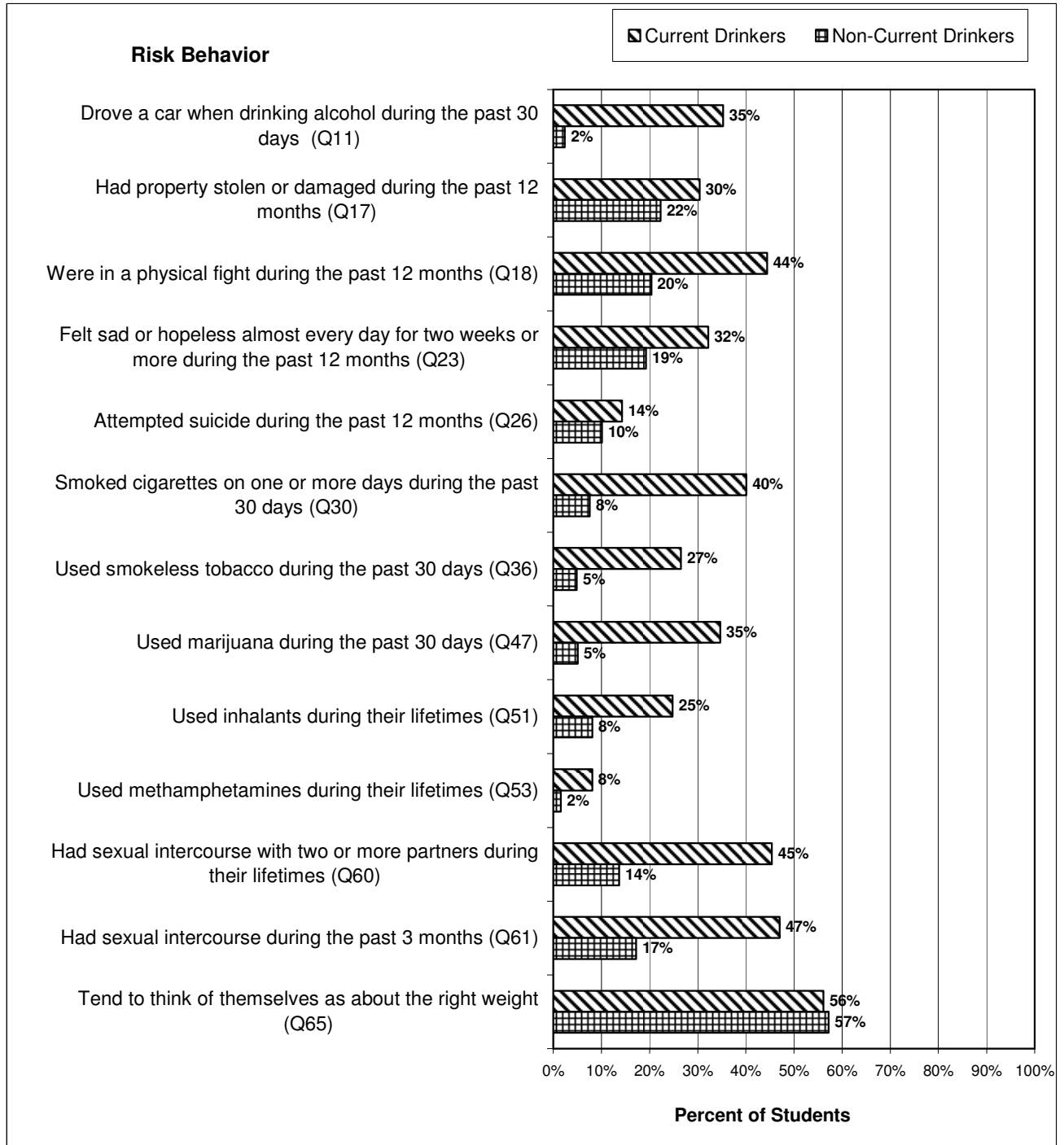


Figure 2
2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Binge Drinkers vs. Non-Binge Drinkers
Montana High School Students

